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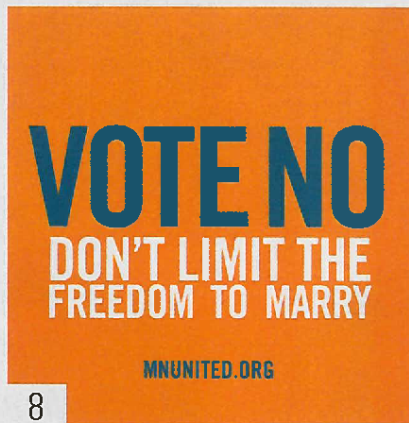
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Photo by Jennifer Simonson



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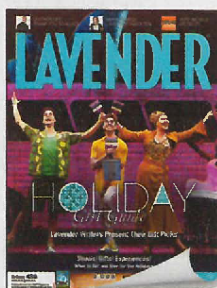
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ON THE COVER

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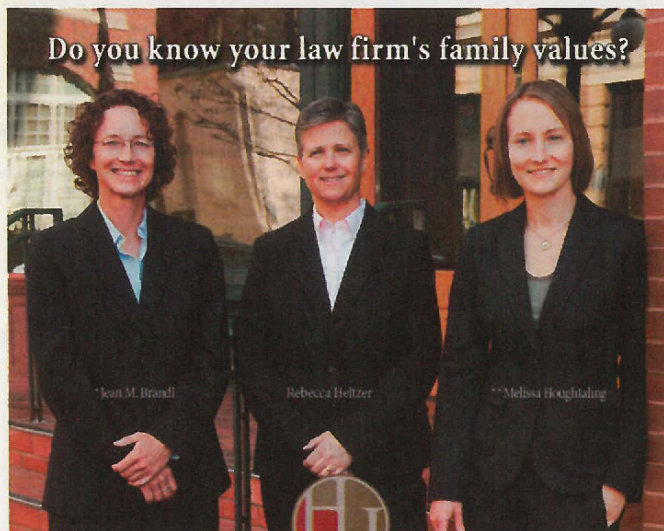
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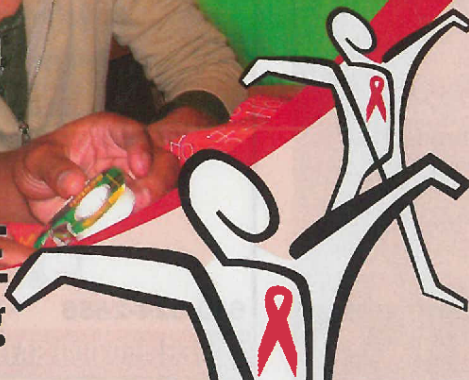
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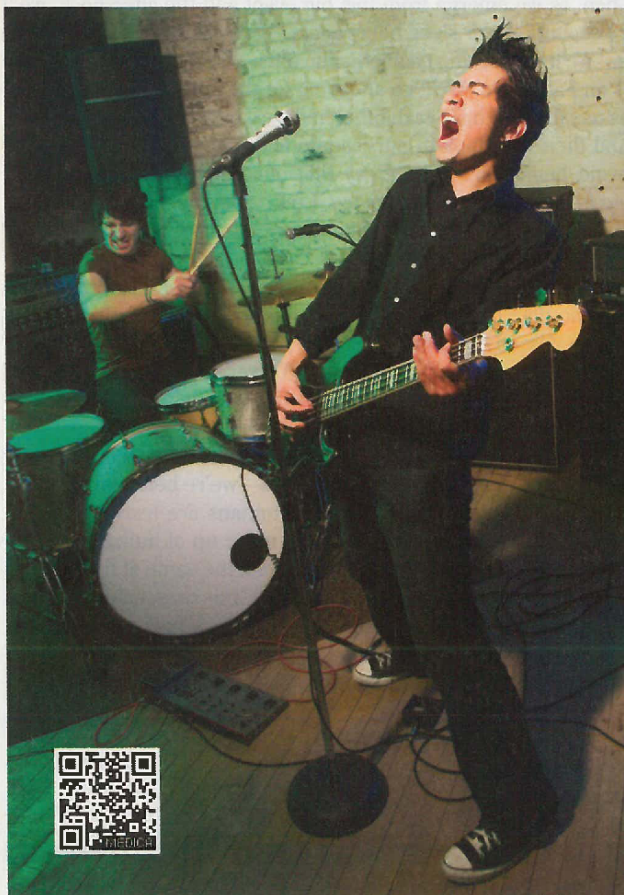
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FROM THE EDITOR | Andy Lien

VOTE NO 2012: WE DID IT

WE DID IT. HALLELUJAH, WE DID IT.

It would seem like the GLBT publication of the state that just defeated an amendment discriminating against the community would be dripping with victory coverage the week after the election. Clearly, it's not. The election happened just as we were putting this issue to bed, so we unapologetically present our Holiday Gift Guide just in time for the day after Thanksgiving. But, believe me when I tell you that I'm pretty sure the VOTE NO campaign and election results will get their due coverage in the year-end issue. I have it on good authority. Ahem.

Where were you when you got the news that the state Voted NO? Were you at RiverCentre with Minnesotans United for All Families? Were you snuggled on the couch with your family anxiously keeping the proverbial candle vigilantly lit for the returns to be in our favor? Were you at a local bar in the time between last call and closing time? Were you in your pajamas the next morning flipping through channels or clicking through the internet? The hour was wee, the moment was historical.

I was at RiverCentre taking pictures of the speakers and happenings to post them on Lavender's Facebook page as the evening progressed. It wasn't the usual, objective position for a person in the media to take; I am invested in this. No, Lavender didn't get involved with the rest of the politics of the campaign since our audience base is politically mixed, but Lavender clearly took a stance against the amendment. And, I wanted to be there both in solidarity as well as to document the crucial moments of the night as the election results came in. The vibe was that of cautious optimism. It ended in relieved euphoria.

So many hugs. So many tears. So many smiles. So much relief.

And then we went home.

Leaving the rally to go to the parking ramp at 2:00 in the morning was surreal. Hugging along the way. Starting up the Jeep, driving out with other vehicles stamped with VOTE NO signage. Driving along the empty streets of St. Paul to a nearly deserted I-94 to then get home to hunt for parking by my loft. Walking the dog in a near-dead state of shock. Catching up on Facebook and seeing how many people were at the rally via social networking. Crawling into bed at 4:00 to lie awake until 5:00. Waking up to the rest of Wednesday that was going to happen regardless of the election results.

Now what?

Rest. This community has been working toward November 6 for so long—that it's come and gone deserves the same acknowledgement and reverence as any big event in our lives. We go through it, we come out on the other side, and we rest. We regroup. We evaluate. We play. We take some "me time." After fertile there is fallow.

Just take a time-out. At the United for Our Future Rally at the State Capitol on Wednesday, November 7, it was stressed that we need to celebrate.

Heck, we need to soak in celebration until our fingers get pruned. It has been earned. It is deserved.

Then, as we emerge from this big event and the aftershock, we'll start keeping regular sleep hours again. We'll eat more healthy meals again. We'll stop seeing each other so often. We'll see more everyday posts on Facebook. We'll go shopping for the holidays. We'll pick up life as usual. We'll miss each other and we'll miss the activity.

And then we'll look to our leaders for what will be coming next. To avoid being partisan, I'll say that our new State Legislature is poised to be the most receptive to GLBT rights than it has ever been. We have every reason to have high expectations of our leaders; their feet will be held to the fire.

The wishy-washy element to this next phase of GLBT rights is that there is no date that is on the books like there was for this amendment vote. We all had November 6 burned into our brains—we knew we'd have an answer on November 7. We were working for it like I'm working toward today's print deadline: it's over when it's over. The goal either will or will not have been achieved.

Next, we have to articulate our goals. We have to impose our own deadlines. You know how this works—we're better when we're working with concrete expectations. Humans are terribly predictable. And, being that our legislature is made up of humans that we have elected to represent us, we have to ask the same of them.

My own cautious optimism has turned into reasonable anticipation. I anticipate more progress. I expect it. We have a long way to go toward equality for this community, but the time has never been better to get out there and demand it.

I'll see you out there.

With thanks,

Andy 

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A Waiting Game, 2012

With an early deadline for this Edgewise, I don't yet know whether to break open the bubbly or cry in my beer.

Will "NO" have won the day, or will "YES" tell the world that a majority of Minnesotans have voted that discrimination should be written into the very fabric of our state constitution—that their gay friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors will be denied the rights (515 state and some 1,100 Federal) that they themselves enjoy? They will have chosen YES even though gay Minnesotans already cannot marry.

A recent article I read chided those for whom, they asserted, GLBT issues were the highest or only priority. I don't know anyone who has been concerned solely by GLBT issues this year, but it would be a mistake for straights or gays to believe that GLBT "issues" are not, in fact, of great concern, and that they will continue to be so.

For whether NO or YES has prevailed, Minnesotans of the same sex or gender cannot marry, and this becomes not merely a "GLBT issue," but a civil rights issue, and yes, it involves the First Amendment that guarantees freedom of religion. While some churches be-

wail the loss of their religious rights, they have funneled millions of (untaxed) dollars into denying marriage to others, steamrolling over individuals and churches whose beliefs embrace all citizens, churches that already marry same-sex couples, and individuals whose spiritual path espouses equality and love for all.

This implacable determination of some to deny others the rights they themselves enjoy is an intensely American, not sexual, issue, and it is not going to go away.

When I was first able to vote (1964), *Loving vs. Virginia* (1967) had not been heard, and miscegenation laws were still on the books; no one outside of Greenwich Village knew of the Stonewall Inn until 1969, and the idea of homos having any rights at all was not on the horizon.

Huge strides have been made since then, and today (despite the efforts of the ubiquitous Frank Schubert, the Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt, and a myriad others) things continue to change, and will, step by step, until all Minnesotans—all Americans—have equal rights.

This is my belief—it's protected by the First Amendment. ◻



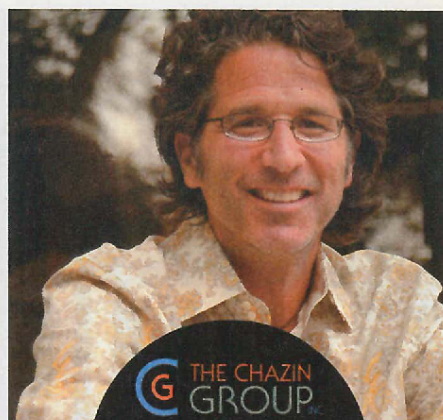
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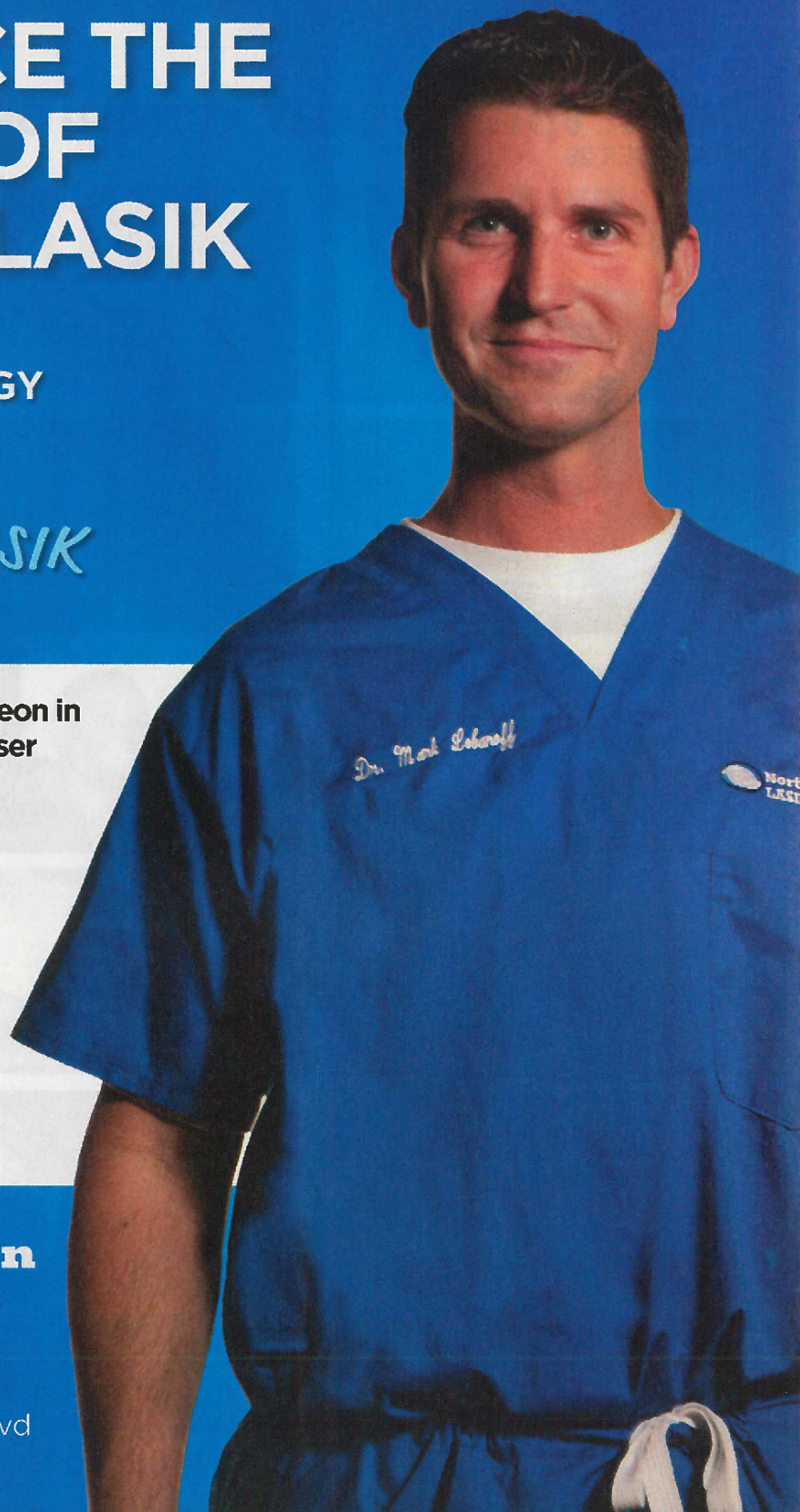
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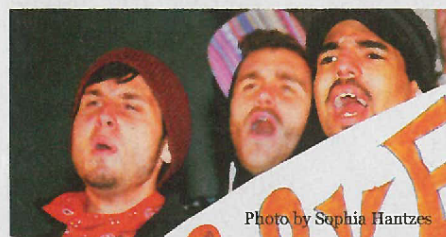


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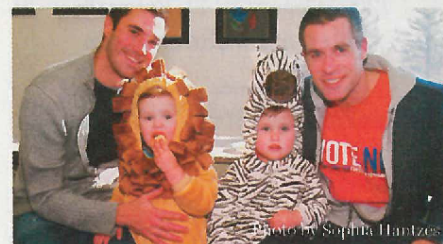


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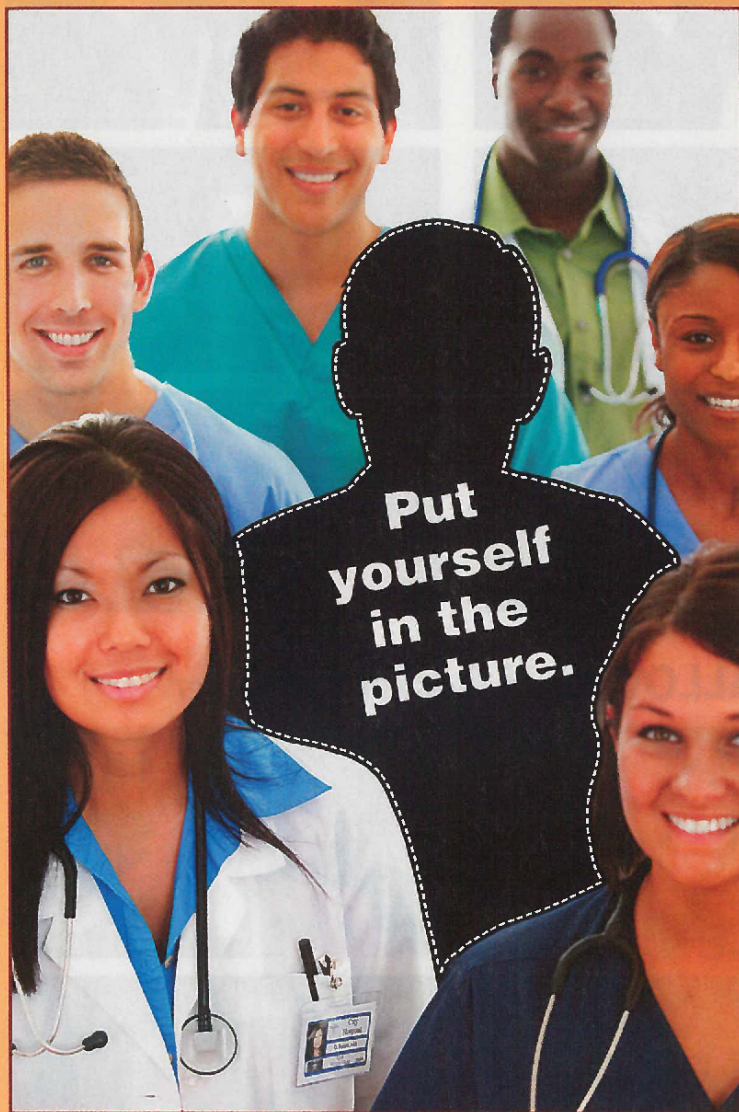


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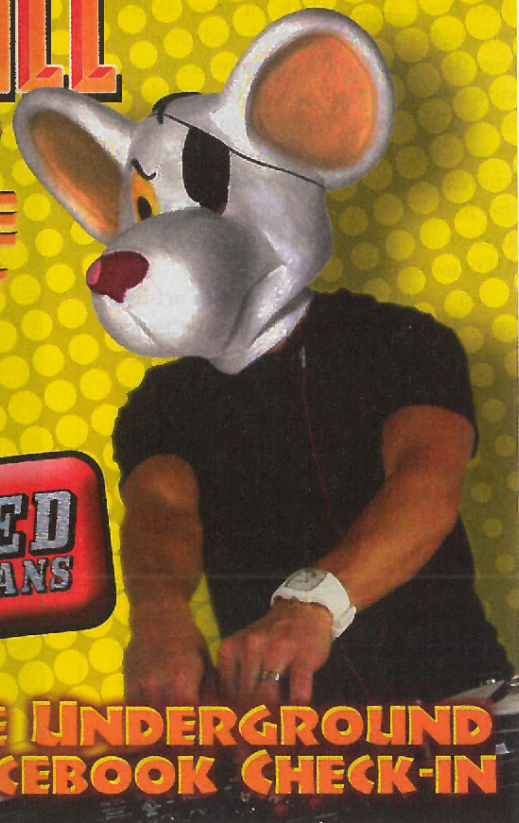
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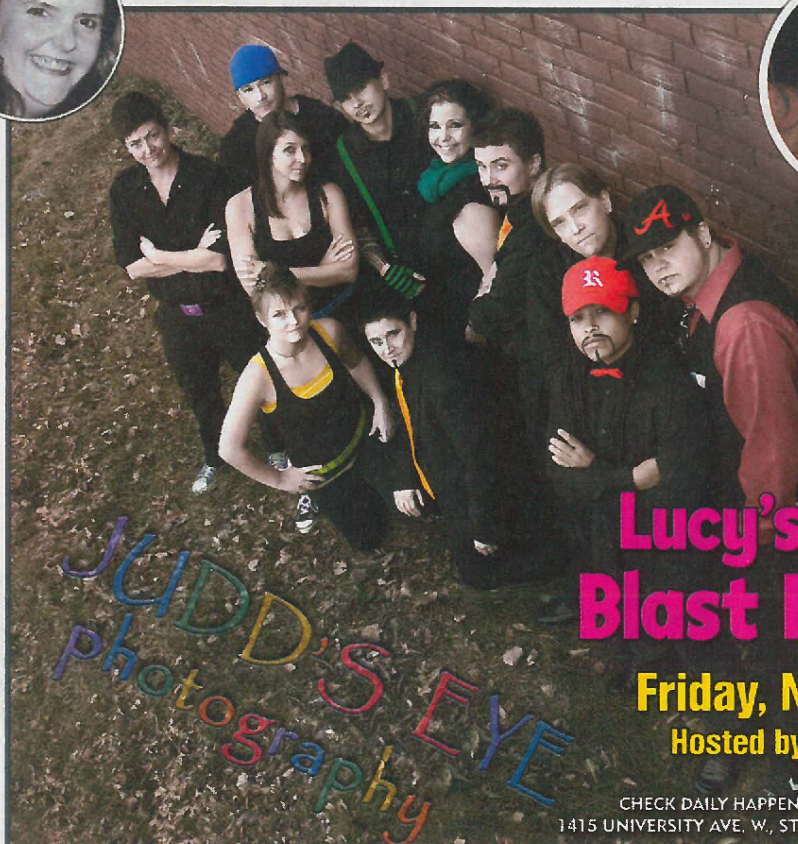
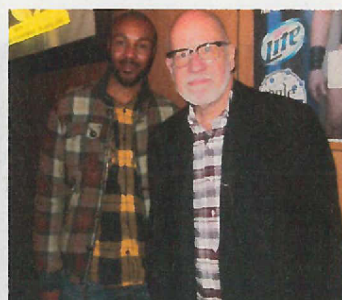
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SPOTLIGHT | John Townsend



Beauty, Heart, and Spirit: The Sacred Legacy of Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian. Photo Courtesy Christopher Cardozo Fine Art

BEAUTY, HEART, AND SPIRIT: THE SACRED LEGACY OF EDWARD S. CURTIS AND THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN

Through Jan. 6
Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, Mpls.
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Profound and exhilarating, this deeply evocative photography exhibit chronicles the vision of Wisconsin-born Edward Sheriff Curtis (1868-1952) who made a monumental photo-ethnographic study of Native Americans between 1906 and 1930. Curtis also recorded Native languages and music. President Teddy Roosevelt gushed about his talent. But before one plays the racism card against him, an excellent exhibit video addresses that so that the politically-correct must process that topnotch Native American observers consider Curtis invaluable. Had he not come along, there probably wouldn't have even been a photographic record of note of Native people. Consider, too, that in the 19th and early 20th century, photographs of whites showed them dressed their best. Ditto Natives and the gorgeous clothing this exhibit's photos convey.

Furthermore, some Curtis images are a breathtaking prelude to the majestic nature photos of Ansel Adams—*At the Old Well*

of *Acoma, Crater Lake, An Oasis in the Badlands, and Canyon de Chelly* (which was actually taken in 1904). Man in balance with nature is mystically rendered in *Katenai Duck Hunter*. Beautifully vulnerable domestic scenes include *Taos Water Carriers* and *The Potter*, and close-ups of children and youth will tug your heart.

COMPANY

Through Nov. 18
Ordway McKnight Theatre, 345 Washington St., St. Paul
(651) 224-4222
www.latteda.org

Director Peter Rothstein shares, "I have always loved the score of *Company*. It's one Sondheim classic after another. But the book never spoke to me; it felt limited to a specific time and place. However, reading the script in light of the current marriage debate, this once-groundbreaking musical suddenly felt relevant and important again. I've moved the action from 1970 to 2012, which hopefully sheds a contemporary light on Sondheim and book-writer George Furth's hilarious and profound work."

Clearly, Rothstein's approach has paid off. Theater Latté Da's *Company* has garnered rave reviews which have acknowledged the update. Moreover, Dieter Bierbrauer as protagonist Bobby, who weighs the pros and cons of tying the knot, has only increased his popularity as one of the region's great musical actors.

THE SESSIONS

Currently Screening
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There are few films in all of cinema that approach the healing power of *The Sessions*. Perhaps no film has so guilelessly defied cultural mandates that explicit sexuality must be automatically shamed. Its source: Mark O'Brien's autobiographical essay, *On Seeing*

A Sex Surrogate. And though it will be said over and over, I submit that John Hawkes and Helen Hunt give consummately noble, historic, and Oscar-worthy portrayals. Moreover, what in other hands would have been tragic becomes a transcendently expansive and thrilling film experience that could actually shift your perception of reality.

Minnesota-born Hawkes plays Mark O'Brien, a poetic 1980s polio survivor who must spend much time in an iron lung. A 38-year-old virgin, his emotional layers are delicately interconnected with his heterosexuality. Pure fate (or destiny) leads him into erotic mentorship from a highly evolved woman and sex surrogate therapist, Cheryl Cohen Greene (Hunt). Religious types, excessive porn consumers, and others who feel compelled to call her a whore/prostitute and/or to call him a whoremonger, misogynist, fornicator, etc. will be forced to re-think such stupid, culturally-received stereotypes.

Through Ben Lewin's sensitive direction and screenwriting, Geoffrey Simpson's intimate cinematography, Lisa Bromwell's deft editing, and Marco Beltrami's exquisite score, nothing short of a milestone film has emerged that rejects out-of-hand the asexual stereotype of persons with disabilities. Instead, it integrates their sexual expression as a vital part of healthy living. A splendidly radical notion.

In one of the finest performances of his superlative career, William H. Macy reveals sublime nuance as Mark's priest and pal. He embodies society's conflict of sex as immoral v. natural, and the film's overall view implies that sex is actually a profound healing force. This shattering insight is understood by the entire major supporting cast, mostly female. They are fabulous, brave, and compassionate. *The Sessions* comes closer to settling the spirit v. the flesh issue of the major western religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—than perhaps any work of art ever. If everyone was required to see it, there would be a cultural shift away from sexual shame. ◻



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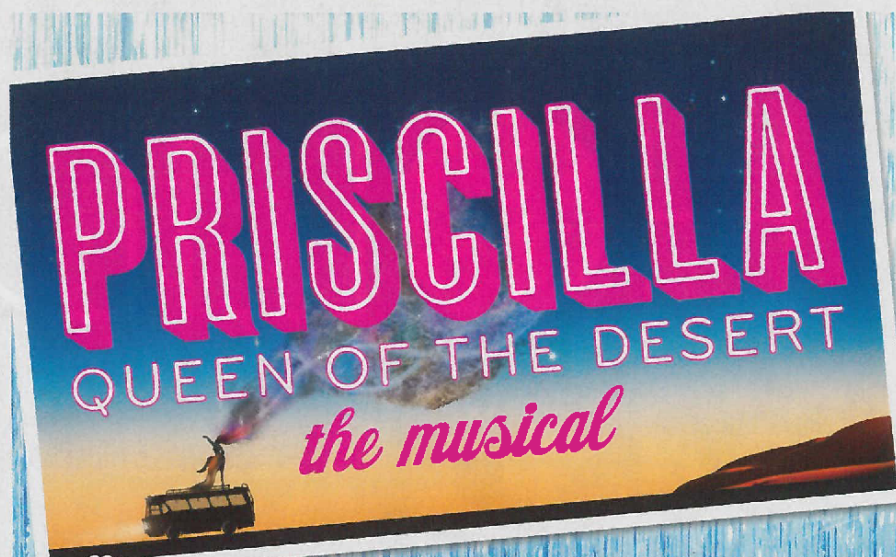
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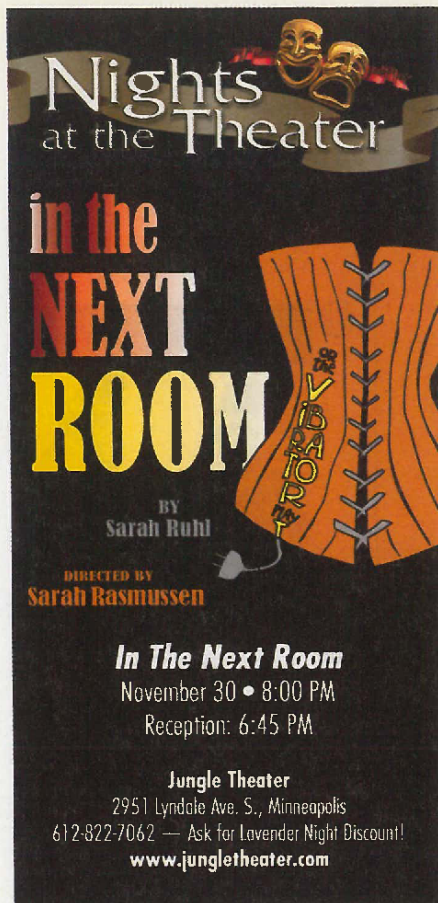
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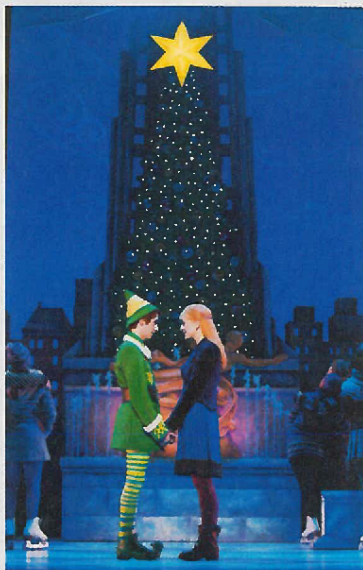
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5

A JOHN WATERS
CHRISTMAS



1. A Christmas Carol The Guthrie's holiday favorite is especially worth seeing this year because it's directed by celebrated choreographer Joe Chvala of Flying Foot Forum fame. Note that Chvala is the "director." He is known for vibrantly adventurous, original work awash in whimsicality. On the bright side, you may have seen his *French Twist* at the Guthrie's Dowling Studio, which poked fun at cultural motifs from France. However, Chvala also has a knack for bringing his vibrancy into dark subject matter. For example, at the Walker Art Center, Chvala created a powerful meditation on Norse myth titled *Fire and Ice*. At Bloomington Civic, he staged an evocative *Into the Woods*, Stephen Sondheim's cryptic re-imagining of classic fairy tales. And most ambitious of all was *Heaven at Dowling Studio*, which depicted grim realities of a war-torn Eastern Europe. These are surely good signs for directing Charles Dickens's timeless tale of dark socio-economic realities. **Through Dec. 29. Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls. (612) 377-2224. www.guthrietheater.org.**

2. Elf: The Broadway Musical Whatever your religious or lack of religious view is, the Christmas season spirits forth a marvelous imaginative energy that sparks our dreams and fantasies. What we thought was impossible we may consider to be possible. Views that miracles are merely myths are put aside in hopes and visions that miracles can happen. So if you are not tapping into that imaginative wavelength, you may well be missing out. That's why, just for fun, check out the Broadway musical stage version of *Elf* adapted from the hit 2003 film. The national tour challenges those who reject the Christmas spirit. When an orphan crawls into Santa's gift bag and thence to the North Pole, he becomes one of the family, so to speak. But years later when he realizes he is actually a human being, he goes to the Big Apple to find his father. Unfortunately, he discovers his dad is on Santa's "naughty" list! **Dec. 5-30. Ordway Center, 345 Washington St., St. Paul. (651) 224-4222. www.ordway.org.**

3. Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus, Our First Noel: A Holiday Homecoming One of America's most honored gay choruses is home for the holidays with a brand new Artistic Director, Ben Riggs. Classic favorites like "Silver Bells" and "I Saw Three Ships" will be sung, not to mention "Christmas Time Is Here" from *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. In the chorus's history statement, it says, "As an organization that celebrates diversity and uses music as a way to transform, educate, and heal, TCGMC works toward the elimination of homophobia and intolerance of community outreach." Formed in 1981, the word "gay" was added to its title in 1991. 75% of its audience is from the Twin Cities metro area, but the chorus has performed throughout the state and been a big hit at national festivals. Over the past 30 years, more than 750 singers have performed for over 200,000 people. TCGMC is also known for their superb commissions dealing with issues of addiction and AIDS. **Dec. 7 & 8 at 8pm and Dec. 9 at 2pm. Ted Mann Concert Hall, U of M, 2128 Fourth St. S., Mpls. (612) 624-2345. www.tcgmc.org.**

4. Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas The Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis is one of the world's foremost children's theaters, and one of their signature shows is back for the holidays. Their version of the Dr. Seuss classic, which first premiered in 1994, actually transferred to Broadway in 2007, and is now revived back home here for the holiday season. *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*, the rhyme-driven storybook published in 1957, is the source, of course. It's about a cave-dwelling grouch with a heart "two sizes too small." This creature lives atop a mountain and looks down on the happy village of Whoville and is disgusted by the happy Christmas festivities going on there. The Grinch is so drenched in negativity that he cannot bear that anyone is happy, so he essentially terrorizes Whoville to disrupt and loot their Christmas. It's a cautionary, but ultimately uplifting, story about the all-consuming character of those who refuse to see good in things around them. **Through Dec. 30. Children's Theatre Company, 2400 Third Av. S., Mpls. (612) 874-0400. www.childrenstheatre.org.**

5. A John Waters Christmas Did you know that the so-called Pope of Trash and Prince of Puke also does an acclaimed one-man Christmas show? The iconic John Waters from Baltimore brings his 'adult' humor to put the 'X' in Xmas at Mill City Nights. Waters enjoyed a nice long run with his trashy art collection at the Walker Art Center, which actually won him a whole new generation of local fans. However, it's the John Waters film canon that really put the Pope on the map. Films like *Polyester*, *Hairspray*, and *Pink Flamingos* (which has been described as "gross" more than perhaps any film in cinematic history), have secured him a spot in the pantheon of indie film. Waters's films also brought forth one of the great drag figures of the 20th century, the late Divine. Other major figures directed by Waters include Kathleen Turner, Tab Hunter, Ricki Lake, and the beguiling Patty Hearst. **Fri., Dec. 14 at 7pm. 111 Fifth St. No., Mpls. (888) 9-AXS-TIX. www.millicitynights.com.**

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1. Priscilla, Queen of the Desert - The Broadway Musical: National Tour Debut In 1994, Stephan Elliot's film, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, set the cultural stage for a vastly expanded acceptance of drag and transgender concepts on a global level. Two drag queens and a transsexual traverse the Australian outback on a road trip decked with sequins, feathers, high heels, and mascara. The juxtaposition of cultivated fashion among human beings and the luminous raw power of nature sears into the viewer's imagination. And now you can see the stage version! Parameters are crossed and comfort zones expanded when the trio performs their campy show in isolated Alice Springs. Fans of pop tunes from the '60s to the '80s will reminisce with "Both Sides Now," "I Say a Little Prayer," "Don't Leave Me This Way," "Material Girl," "It's Raining Men," and of course, "I Will Survive." Bette Midler produced the Broadway production now on tour. In London, it was nominated for the Olivier Award for Best Musical. **Jan. 8-13. Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Av., Mpls. (800) 859-SHOW. www.hennepintheatretrust.org.**

2. A Don't Hug Me Christmas Carol Warning: This show has a tendency to sell out, so you should consider reserving early. Moreover, we can now say that after eight years, the Don't Hug Me franchise is a Minnesota tradition. Their flamboyant Christmas show spoof is set in Bunyan Bay where a very difficult bar owner named Gunner Johnson has a fit of anger with his wife, Clara, and storms out of the bar, snowmobiles across the lake, falls through the ice, and into a coma. In Gunner's unconscious dream state, he is visited/confronted by the ghost of Christmas past, present, and future. Phil Olson wrote the script and lyrics. Paul Olson composed the music. Doug Anderson plays Gunner. Comedy fans recall Anderson's campy take on gay dating and room-mating, *Boy! Oh Boy!* with John Trones and his crossgender turn in *Gaydar's Dames at Sea* for which he was named *Lavender's* Best Musical. **Nov. 23- Dec. 29. New Century Theatre, City Center, 615 Hennepin Av. S., Mpls. (800) 982-2787. www.hennepintheatretrust.org.**

3. All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914 Christmas Eve, 1914. It's World War I, and soldiers on both sides miraculously stop fighting and begin celebrating the holiday. Hence, the subject of one of the region's new holiday traditions: *All is Calm*, set in a space dubbed "No Man's Land," with magnificent vocals by the Cantus ensemble. The actors: John Catron, David Roberts, and Alan Sorenson. Creator Peter Rothstein shares, "I wanted to tell the story in their words, so I created the drama primarily through found text including letters, official war documents, autobiographies, World War I poetry, grave stone inscriptions, and even an old radio broadcast. I was able to spend time along the Western Front and conduct extensive research in Brussels, Paris, and London. It was incredibly powerful to stand on the very spot and have access to primary sources." **Dec. 19-22. Pantages Theatre, 710 Hennepin Av., Mpls. (800) 982-2787. www.hennepintheatretrust.org.**

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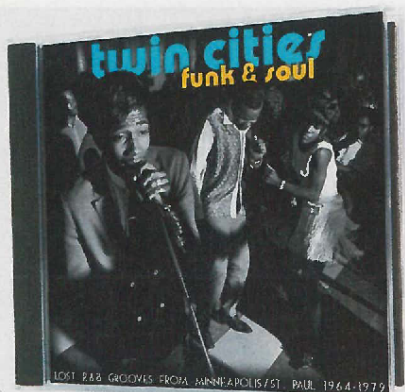
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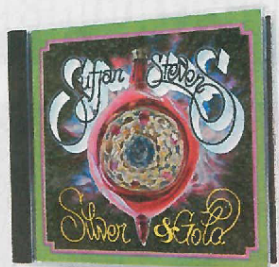
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1. Twin Cities Funk & Soul

Who doesn't want to get down over the holidays? Secret Stash Records mines 15 years of local music—from 1964 to 1979—and comes up with two albums of absolute gems that help to track a piece of the area's musical legacy that is often lost amid the garage rock, folk, punk, and latter-day funk of Prince and his crew. From the Motown-like vibe of the Valdons and Jackie Harris and the Champions through to Willie and the Bumblebees, Morris Wilson and the Prophets of Peace, this is an album that gets the heart pumping and the hips shaking. There's also a 32-page newspaper loaded with the history of the scene, from famous scenesters to studios to venues that brought the funk every week.

2. Sufjan Stevens Silver & Gold

Somehow, it is fitting that indie-rock misfit Stevens would tackle Christmas music via a 50-plus song set of traditional tunes and off-kilter originals. Whatever the reason, *Silver & Gold* promises to be a perfect gift for the Current-lover in your family. Not only do you get Stevens's signature takes on the likes of "Joy to the World" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," but the box set—the tunes are spread across five eps—is a veritable collection of presents in itself. It comes complete with stickers, a temporary tattoo, a build-it-yourself Christmas ornament, and even chord charts so can sing along with "Christmas Unicorn." You can even choose between the rather affordable CD set, or the limited edition vinyl set, for that special discerning record-collector.

3. Barbra Streisand Release Me

It may not be a holiday album, but there's certainly reasons to celebrate. *Release Me* is Streisand opening the treasure-trove of her personal collection, culling 11 never-heard-before tracks from across her half-century career. There are cuts from the planned-but-not-released sequel to *The Broadway Album* (with songs from *The Wiz*, *Finian's Rainbow*, and *Brigadoon*), a studio version of "With One More Look at You," originally cut for *A Star Is Born*, and a version of Randy Newman's "I Think It's Going to Rain Today," featuring the songwriter on piano. The striking breadth of Streisand's music is on display throughout the collection, while her signature voice and style helps to unify music recorded decades apart.

4. John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John This Christmas

The gay factor of this is off the charts, as the stars of *Saturday Night Fever*, *Grease*, and, most especially, *Xanadu* unite for a very special holiday album. Oh, but there's more than just a couple of 1970s favorites trying to regain past glories. Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett and the Count Basie Orchestra, and Chick Corea make appearances as well. (So does Kenny G, but there always needs to be a bit of the darkness before the light.) There are plenty of holiday classics to sing along to while decorating the tree with your favorite kitsch from the past—truly a perfect combination.

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1. St. Croix Chocolate Co. There are truffles. There are sweets. There are even bites of deep, dark chocolate. But then, there is St. Croix Chocolate. These confections are stunning works of art, pleasing the mind, tongue, and soul. Robyn Dochterman and Deldre Pope believe that every bite of a St. Croix Chocolate should be bliss, and I'd like to congratulate them: mission accomplished. The artisan chocolate is combined with a stunning array of creative and traditional flavors, plus they are each a dark jewel to behold. Beautiful and each one is utterly, mind-blowingly delicious. Trust us, we've tried every one. www.stcroixchocolateco.com. Photos by Jennifer Simonson. **2. Duck Fat from Heartland** I was once gifted a pint of duck fat from Heartland Farm Direct Market and was forced to paste on my best "present face." Oh... gee, isn't that just... ducky? Ah ha ha. Mine eyes have been opened, and now I can't imagine keeping a little bit on hand. There's nothing a batch of potatoes loves more than to be cooked in duck fat. Why stop there? Use it to make roux, replace a little butter in cookie recipes with it—heck, chuck some into boxed mac and cheese. Duck fat makes everything better. www.heartlandrestaurant.com. **3. Bare Honey** What sounds like a cutesy come-on is actually a whole new flavor experience. Surely, you know that what honey tastes like. Gold stuff, comes from a bear-shaped bottle, works great in tea, right? Wrong. And yes, I'll stop calling you Shirley. Bare Honey will blow your sweet tooth's mind. I've been setting up side-by-side taste tests for friends—the Bare challenge; this nectar of the buzzy gods is like nothing you have ever tasted before. Gentle sweetness, green grass, honeysuckle, soft floral notes: in a word, Bare Honey is amazing. A perfect present for your honey. www.barehoney.com. **4. Bialetti Aeternum Sauté Pan** Nonstick is great in theory, but once you know about all the chemicals that go into making that slick coating, you can't unknow that this stuff is coming into contact with your food and you. These ceramic coated sauté pans work fantastically, clean beautifully, and are incredibly light weight. I use this for everything. They get a great sear and still the food slides right out—plus, they're beautiful. This is the perfect pan for any cook, an essential. www.bialetti.com.



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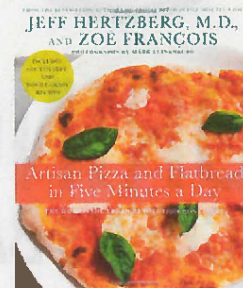
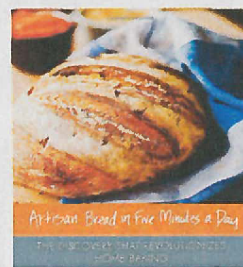
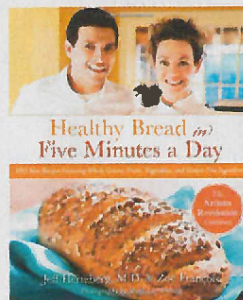


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1. Bittercube Bitters The craft cocktail movement has me exploring new bottles at my favorite liquor stores, but no product has changed my drinking habits more than the addition of Bittercube Bitters. Created by two leaders of the craft cocktail movement, Nick Kosevich and Ira Koplowitz, these are hands down the best bitters ever to dribble into a cocktail. The flavors are so much more than simply bitter, the combination of citrus and exotic spices all combined by hand, enliven every drink. Buy a friend a set of their basic flavors, and witness the birth of another mixologist. **2. Epicurean Cutting Board** Cutting boards can come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and thickness, but no matter the material, they usually end up marred, dried out, cracked, and often stinky. Not anymore: there's a new board from a surprising source—skateboard ramps! Eco and knife friendly, these boards are sweeping cooks' counters around the country, and they're made nearby in Duluth, MN. Check them out at Lunds/Byerly's and Cooks on Crocus Hill. www.epicureanboards.com. **3. Proper Toffee Waffles** Fashioned after the stroopwafel, these barely sweet little disks sandwich sticky, sweet toffee and await the warm beverage of your choice. Simply place one atop a steaming cup of coffee and wait for the toffee to slowly loosen up, the waffle absorbing that toasty fragrance, releasing a tiny waft of cinnamon while also moistening. Wait until you can't take the anticipation one moment longer and bite into the most decadently delicious coffee pairing to come along since the donut. There are only a handful of places that sell great stroopwaffles, and we are lucky enough to have this artisan making these in small batches, with only the best quality ingredients, in St. Paul. www.toffee-waffle.com. **4. Duluth Kitchen Company** The greatest gift for friends and food lovers is always the opportunity to spend more time together. I adore Duluth, MN, and now there's another reason to plan a road trip. This stunning new store just opened and is filled to the gills with gifts for you and those on your "nice" list. Why not plan a road trip with friends for shopping and scene gazing? Fitger's has a hotel adjacent. The DKC samples all of their products, and many are ready to be cracked open and enjoyed. Get a hotel room, maybe a bottle of wine from the on-site shop, and fill up on goodies for a luxury room picnic. Sit back and watch that mesmerizing body of water lash against the shores, as hypnotic as any fire place. www.duluthkitchen.com, www.fitgers.com. **5. Artisan Bread in Five Minutes Books** After years of struggling against my handful-of-this, pinch-of-that cooking methodology, I'm thrilled to announce that I have summited the Kilimanjaro of baking! I can bake a delicious loaf of bread! It's true, amazing, and I am completely late to this party. When the *Artisan Bread in Five Minutes a Day* original book came out, it shot to the summit of all the best-seller lists, and I missed it. I've found these books (there are 3 in the series) from Zoë François and Dr. Jeff Hertzberg to be inspiring and easy to master. www.artisanbreadinfive.com.



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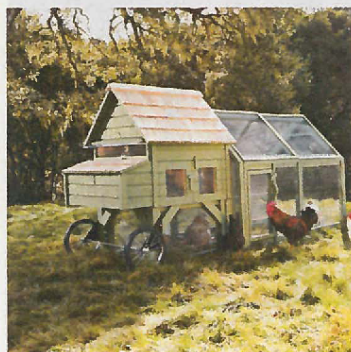
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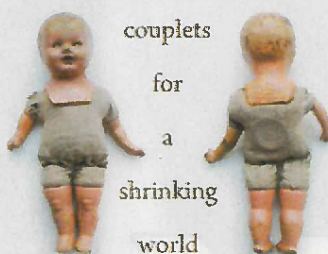
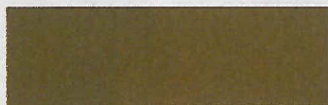
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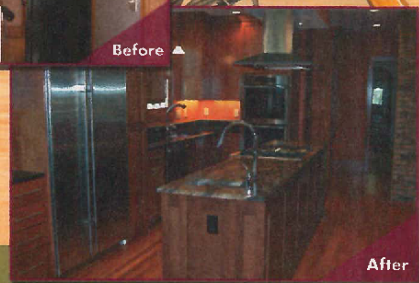
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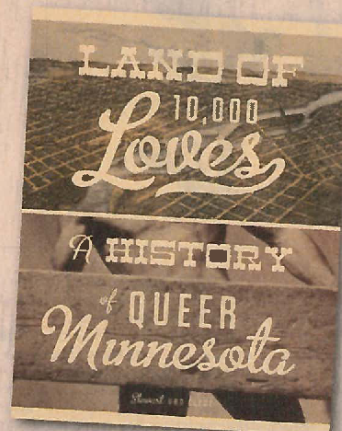
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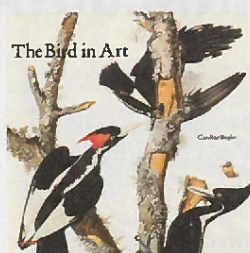
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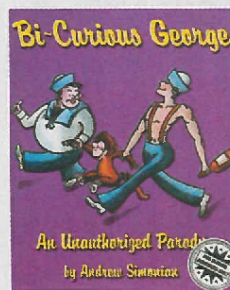
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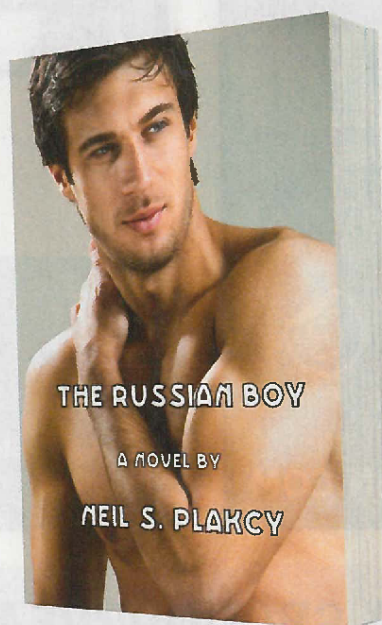
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1. A Cookie Before Dying Olivia Greyson, owner of The Gingerbread House, Chatterley Heights's nirvana for the cookie obsessed, is once again plunged into intrigue and murder with the stabbing death of a stranger in the town park. A ghostly ballerina, a vindictive, anti-sugar health food shop, and lots of icing top Lowell's second Cookie Cutter Shop Mystery. Written by Virginia Lowell. \$7.99. **Berkley Prime Crime.** **2. Land of 10,000 Loves: A History of Queer Minnesota** An excellent springboard from which to dive into Queer Minnesota's history. Van Cleve dared to plunge into the vast mother lode of material at UMN's Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies. He does not claim to have "told it all," but he writes cogently and entertainingly. His use of small, discrete sections allows the reader to sail from start to finish, or choose to meander around an archipelago of topics at will. 130 illustrations. Written by Stewart Van Cleve. \$24.95. **University of Minnesota Press.** **3. The Bird in Art** A gorgeous volume depicting man's relation to birds through some 250 works of art, ranging from the Paleolithic to the present. Author and art historian Caroline Bugler presents her text thematically, showing birds in myth, as hunters, and as companions. Ornithologist and art lovers alike will cherish this book. \$59.95. **Merrell.** **4. The Russian Boy** Neil Plakcy, author of the Mahu mystery series and the Golden Retriever Mysteries (*In Dog We Trust*), plunges us into a modern-day art heist cum historical gay romance. The erotic present of the thief and theft blends into the erotic elderly painter and his young subject. Sometimes sexy, sometimes violent—or both. A heady mix to drink in deep draughts. \$10.99. **5. Silhouette of a Sparrow** A charming YA novel of a young girl's coming of age—and awareness—set in 1926 Minnesota. Sixteen-year-old Garnett Richardson is sent to spend the summer with wealthy relatives in a resort hotel in Excelsior. Her father is ill, and she will be expected to return in the fall to marry and help support her family. But there is the possibility of a college aid, and the feelings aroused by Isabella, a runaway and dance hall performer. Ornithologist Garnett is torn between the freedom of her beloved birds and duty. Written by Molly Beth Griffin. \$16.95. **Milkweed Editions.** **6. Children of the Northlights** For children or adults, *Children* is a reprint of one of Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaires' lovely books on the Sami, the people of the reindeer among whom the authors lived. The sweet, lively drawings introduce readers young and old to Lise and Lasse, siblings who live at the very top of Norway. \$16.95. **University of Minnesota Press.** **7. Bi-Curious George: An Unauthorized Parody** Definitely not for the kids—at least those under eighteen. This unauthorized bi-curious George flees the jungle to follow the Man with the Sassy Beret. Testing his limits with sailors, firemen, body shots, bodacious parties, and drug dealers, George finally finds a safe—and swinging—haven. Written by Andrew Simonian. \$14.95. **Cider Mill Press.** **8. The Boy Who Slept Under the Stars: A Memoir in Poetry** Kinship, love, and loss inform this memoir of the author's brother, lost on a solo hike in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. In poetry and prose, Roseann Lloyd eloquently expresses the special grief that afflicts those who must mourn without the body of the loved one. Her feelings ripple out to embrace a kidnapped boy, climbers missing on Mt. Everest, and others who have never returned. \$15.95. **Holy Cow! Press.** **9. Baroque: Theatrum Mundi: The World as a Work of Art by Dr. Barbara Borngässer and Gothic: Visual Art of the Middle Ages: 1140-1500** by Prof. Dr. Bruno Klein Publisher Rolf Torman's team continues their remarkable ten-year Collection of Art Epochs projects (see *Ars Sacra*, *Lavender* 418) with Baroque and Gothic. The oversize format (11 1/4 x 15 x 1/2) and straightforward photography by Achim Bednorz make the subjects fairly come alive in your presence, opening a wonder of hidden detail unavailable in other art books. Each contains over 600 photos in 568 pages—a splendid feast for the eye and spirit. \$150.00. **n.f. Ullman.**



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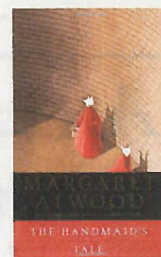
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North Country Bears, All God's Children MCC, PFund,
Minneapolis Movie Bears, TCGMC

HOLIDAY

Gift Guide

gifts ideas from

KATHLEEN WATSON



1. Slingshot Planner Even radicals need to plan ahead. This pocket-sized planner is perfect for the socially-conscious rebel. With unique doodles adorning each page, a list of radical contacts across the country, and even a reminder about the importance of consent, this planner is quirky and cool. Boneshaker Books carries two sizes in a plethora of colors! \$6-12.00. www.boneshakerbooks.com. **2. Battlestar Galactica: The Complete Series** With a great balance of combat, love, and hot people in uniform, this series is absolutely addictive. You don't have to be a sci-fi geek to fall in love with these people as they struggle to keep humanity alive after a devastating attack from the Cylons. Add socio-political commentary to a stunningly beautiful cast, and this series is a winner. \$137.99. www.target.com. **3. Gin and Tonic Ice Tray** Spruce up your cocktails with ice cubes molded from this witty tray. It's sure to make even the most serious drinkers chuckle. Contains four ocean liners and four icebergs. \$10.00. www.fredflare.com. **4. Vosges Haut Chocolat Bacon + Chocolate Gift Box** For the chocolate connoisseur, this gift box combines two of the greatest foods on earth—bacon and chocolate. This funky, yet perfect, marriage between the two results in bacon chocolate bars, "flying pigs," bacon caramel toffee, and bacon chocolate chip pancake mix. Oink oink. \$69.00. www.vosgeschocolate.com. **5. Growler from Harriet Brewing** This is definitely the gift that keeps on giving! From West Side to Dark Abbey, the lucky person who receives this growler under the Christmas tree will be able to drink themselves under the table with this refillable gift. \$5 Growler deposit, \$12-15.00 for beer at Harriet Brewing. www.harrietbrewing.com. **6. Minnesota Mittens** These are "mittens with a mission," and they're made right here in Minnesota! Made from recycled yarn and fabric, and constructed locally, these unique mittens are sure to be a hit. \$16.50. www.bibelotshops.com. **7. Lush Bath Bombs** Pamper the princess on your list with handmade bath bombs that explode in the water. Try The Sicilian made with fresh orange slices, or get festive with Jingle Spells (which boasts the ability to alleviate those holiday hangovers). \$4.50 and up. www.lushusa.com. **8. Banagrams** Better than any other word game EVER, Banagrams will definitely keep you hooked for hours. Make words and rearrange them as you get more letters. The possibilities are endless! Make the game even better by trying to spell as many "adult" words as possible! \$14.99. www.target.com. **9. The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood** Never has this 1986 classic been more pertinent. Set in the future when women have no rights over their own reproductive systems, one woman documents her struggle to forget the past and accept her fate. With women's reproductive health being on everyone's minds, this book provides a scary yet beautiful commentary. \$10.32. www.barnesandnoble.com. **10. Volunteer at The Aliveness Project** Give of your time this holiday by helping with holiday baskets, baking cookies, or sewing stockings. Grab a friend or make it a date, and provide hope for people with HIV/AIDS. www.aliveness.org.

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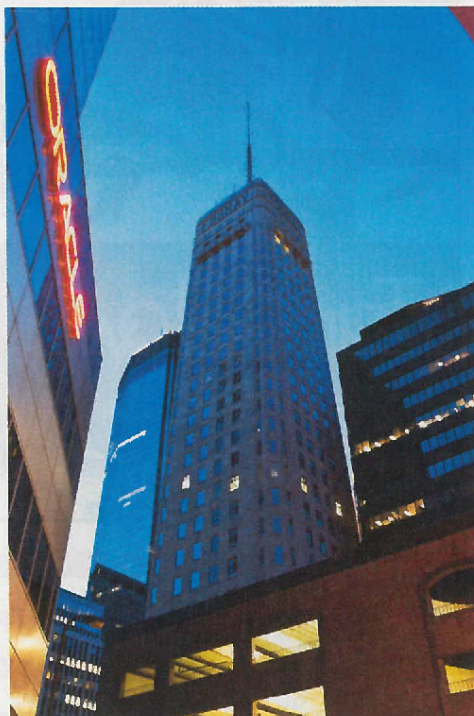
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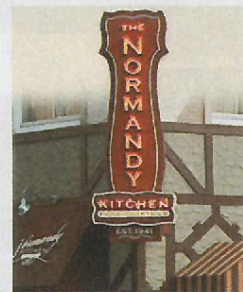
ELLEN KRUG



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1. A Bike Mirror that Actually Stays Fixed in Place I bought a new bike this year (a beautiful white Vita Specialized that soars on the Greenway—one of last year's Xmas wishes that came true). It came equipped with a side mirror that sucks. The mirror requires a near constant adjust, adjust, adjust. Please, gift me with a mirror that stays in place and actually keeps me safe. Here's the candidate: Mirrycle Mountain Bike Mirror, at REI \$18.00—not a bad price when you consider the safety factor. All you bicyclists understand! www.rei.com.
2. A Funky Floor Lamp for My Yet-to-be-Purchased Comfy Chair I've moved my bedroom around to take into account the big-ass building that's going up across the street from my condo. No longer do I have the privacy to sit on my bed and read; now I'll have to cower in a corner away from prying eyes. I still need a comfy chair, but here's the light to go with it: Brazo LED Light Floor Lamp, also known as a light-on-a-stick. Pretty cool if you ask me! \$460.00. www.roomandboard.com.
3. Christmas Eve Night at the Foshay Tower The dream of Wilbur Foshay, the tower bearing his name is 32 stories of unmistakable landmark which dominated the downtown Minneapolis skyline for more than 40 years until the IDS Tower was completed. Rumor has it that Wilbur roams the hotel and stops elevators, presumably for transport to his former penthouse residence. Haunted or not, I want to make this Christmas special—if I'm going to be without family (my usual Xmas scenario), I want to wake up on the 25th enjoying a bit of luxury and room service. www.whotels.com.
4. Gift Certificate to the Normandy Kitchen Located at the corner of 8th Street and 4th Avenue, the Normandy is another Minneapolis mainstay. Now, I know what you're thinking—the Normandy? Really? Yes, really. The Normandy is one of those best kept secrets. Their salads and soups are fantastic, hot French bread adorns the table the moment you sit down, and tasty entrees are reasonably priced. The wait staff and bartenders (that includes you, Greg) are on so nice! This place gets my five stars. www.normandykitchen.com.
5. The Little Black Dress I'm sure I would look absolutely fabulous in this wonderful Suzi Chin Elbow Sleeve Faux Wrap Dress. Wow! What a great look for under \$100. I don't know about you, but this will stretch my thin paycheck in a positive direction. The dress looks like a million bucks! (So does the model, but she's not for sale.) \$98.00. www.shop.nordstrom.com.
6. Peace on Earth Really, man, if, like, the world could be at peace, you know, with no wars or killing or raping or hating or bullying or discriminating or firing or lying or conservative religion intolerance sermonizing or lynching or yelling or punching or knife pulling or plane or car hijacking or gay bashing or genital mutilating or child abusing or lover cheating or kids crying because of hunger or people losing hope, then I'd be one happy and extremely satisfied chick. Cool!

HOLIDAY

Gift Guide

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1. Flared Wine Glasses by Nine Iron Studios from Max's A pair of crystal clear wine glasses wrapped in 24K gold leaf and fused during the blowing process by Nine Iron Studios; handcrafted in Pennsylvania. \$136.00/pair. www.stylebymax.com. **2. Roulette Wheel Cufflinks from J. Novachis** These Swarovski crystal embellished cufflinks from RT by Tateossian of London will be a conversation piece for years to come. How about a pair for yourself –who couldn't use a little luck? \$198.00. J. Novachis: 3930 W 50th St, Edina. **3. Lava Bead Bracelet with Skull Motifs from J. Novachis** Unique unisex bracelet from SBG Designs makes a great gift for the style-conscious nonconformist on your list. Watch how quickly it becomes a regular addition to his or her wardrobe. \$78.00. J. Novachis: 3930 W 50th St, Edina. **4. Boa Emeraude Bracelet by Ziio from Max's** A beaded wrap bracelet of sterling silver, Murano glass beads, chrysoprase, lapis, turquoise, and amazonite; handmade in Italy. \$425.00. www.stylebymax.com. **5. Urbio from Naturally Urban by Linder's** Urbios are functional, modular and stylish. Magnets are what make those sleek vessels hang on to the wall plates. Fill 'em with plants, magazines, pens, or whatever! Use one wall plate or an entire collection. Floor space is precious, give the gift of space and practicality this year. \$15-\$70.00 www.linders.com/naturally-urban.

HOLIDAY

Gift Guide



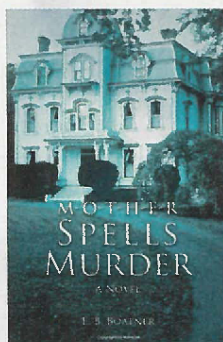
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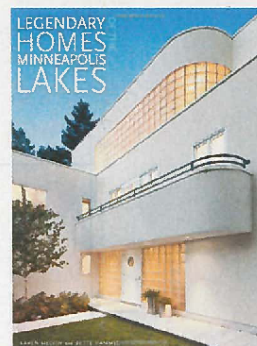
Bye Bye Birdie. Photo by Rick Spaulding

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1. Luxury Oris Watches from Scheharazade Jewelers Swiss-made, automatic mechanical movement, sapphire crystal, and exhibition case backs are the basis for these luxury watches by Oris, the rest of the style and sophistication only expand from there. www.sjewelers.com. **2. Gift Certificate for Chanhassen Dinner Theatres** This year give a holiday gift that isn't the same old song and dance for exactly that, a song and dance (show, that is). Chanhassen Dinner Theatres gift certificates make perfect holiday gifts for everyone on your list because everyone loves an evening at Chan, wine and dining and applauding the classy razzle-dazzle erupting on the stage. Practically speaking, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres' gift certificates are good forever, available in any amount, always the right size and color, include free parking and coat check—and make for easy shopping, too: simply order by phone or online. Gift certificates are valid for anything in the theatre's lineup, leading off with the nonstop singing, dancing, and loads of laughter in the musical send-up of an Elvis-like rock 'n' roll idol in *Bye Bye Birdie*, playing through March 2013. Or use them on the show to follow, the theatre's all-time audience favorite, a revival of the amazing *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Crave a bit of holiday spirit? This year, Chanhassen is featuring a heartwarming jewel of a holiday musical called *A Hometown Christmas Pageant*. And throughout 2013, CDT will continue to offer the comedic antics of Stevie Ray's Comedy Cabaret and a rockin' tribute concert series that audiences can't seem to get enough of. Holiday gift certificates can also be used for lunch, dinner, happy hour, or Sunday brunch in the new Brindisi's Pub—a welcoming, casual hangout. —Carla Waldemar. www.ChanhassenDT.com. **3. M-O-T-H-E-R Spells Murder** One Smart Why Dunnit. Set in 1980s New England, E. B. Boatner's first novel could have been written by a well-seasoned author with many tomes under his belt. In the first chapter of *M-o-t-h-e-r Spells Murder*, Boatner doesn't just dip his toes but plunges in with the savaging of seemingly innocuous senior-home resident, Elinor McGowan. Soon we find out who it was who killed her, but not why. We also discover that, once upon a time, Elinor was the belle of her own ball and worthy of her own novel. The reader is fully engaged in this mystery along with the victim's wry daughter and the potential love interest police inspector, so the rest of the story involves watching them figure out and catch the murderer before he or she does someone else in—as will most certainly happen. Like Ruth Rendell, E. B. Boatner has plumbed the depths of mankind's darker side to reveal generations past and how their corrosive relationships enable murder. If you like clever and cruel writing and fully drawn characters, I fully recommend *M-O-T-H-E-R Spells Murder*. —C.M. Harris, author of *The Children of Mother Glory* and *Entering Oblivion*. \$16.95. www.amazon.com. **4. Legendary Homes of the Minneapolis Lakes** The perfect time for the Peeping Toms in your life who amble around the chain of lakes peering into windows of all those lovely mansions: *Legendary Homes of the Minneapolis Lakes* opens those enticing doors. Writing about and photographing 28 iconic homes on Isles, Cedar, Calhoun and Harriet, local architecture writer Bette Hammel shares insider stories of their construction, remodeling and interior design, while her partner, photographer Karen Melvin, snaps away. Dream on... —Carla Waldemar. \$49.95. www.amazon.com.

HOLIDAY

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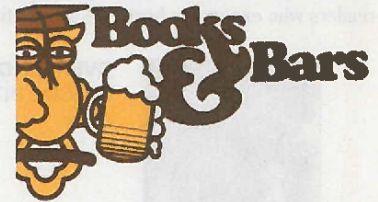


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ANDY LIEN

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1. We Three Kings: A Stocking Full of Awesome II If I could make the Renaissance Festival last all year, it'd be to see the Danger Committee whenever I want. If I had a corporation or a cruise ship or a casino, I'd hire them as entertainment. Comprising the three-person Danger Committee, Caleb McEwen, Mick Lunzer, and Jason LeMay play "Reynaldo," "Bald Guy," and "Other One" in a mixture of comedy, knife-throwing, juggling, and fire. And ninjas. And yo-yos. And produce. And a spinning wheel. To try encapsulate the full extent of their talent, they juggle activated tasers. On a teeter-totter. And live. Luckily for us, they're going to have a holiday show running for over a month at the Brave New Workshop. Make sure to get there and get some of that Stocking Full of Awesome for yourself. Weekends and Special Days: Nov. 23-Dec. 31. www.bravenewworkshop.com. **2. Miss Richfield 1981 2012: We'll All Be Dead By Christmas!** I admit to not knowing much about Miss Richfield 1981 until I attended my first Bingo A-GoGo. Funny. Oh, she's funny. Then, I attended the fundraiser at the Cowles Center for fighting the marriage amendment and I saw her perform her rendition of "Going to the Chapel" and I saw the true genius in Miss Richfield. Oh, my. I fell in love with her. Smart, funny, talented...and she's got great legs. Though she summers in P-Town, she Decembers here and is hauling her cookies from her double-wide trailer in Richfield all the way down to the Illusion Theater in Minneapolis for her Christmas show with performances from Nov. 30 through Dec. 16. Get there before we all perish with the rest of the world, thanks to the Mayans. www.illusiontheater.org. **3. Books for Books & Bars** Do you like books? Do you like bars? How about book clubs? Jeff Kamin has come up with a winning combination of all of the above in Books & Bars. Turning the traditional book club into more of a moderated event, you can find one of three to attend per month and look forward to being entertained and enlightened by other attendees and, sometimes, the authors themselves. Next up for Books & Bars: Dec. 2012 – *Turn of Mind* by Alice LaPlante, Jan. 2013 – *Rin Tin Tin: The Life and the Legend* by Susan Orlean (with video chat), and Feb. 2013 – *Carry the One* by Carol Anshaw (with video chat). Put the books on your list and read up. For dates and location, go to www.booksandbars.com. **4. Miniatures at Cost Plus World Market** I hooted and hollered the day I got the news that Cost Plus World Market was coming back to Minnesota with new locations in Roseville and Bloomington. I kid you not, this is where I get my go-to stocking stuffers. I cherry-pick the cute global candies for the kids and snag bottles of hot sauce and maple syrup for the adults...and Nutella for my own stocking. Examples: Mini Jose Cuervo Cholula Hot Sauce, 2oz, (\$2.99), Tabasco, 6-pack .8oz, (\$5.99), Mini Nutella Pack, .63oz, (\$0.99), Mini Maple Syrup, 1.7oz, (\$3.99). www.worldmarket.com.



Lavender Takes Ten

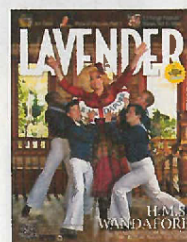
The Minnesota Magazine & Publishing Association (MMPA) held its annual Excellence Awards on November 1, 2012, and Lavender Media proudly accepted ten awards for elements and pieces of Lavender's array of products that had been published between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012. Lavender, as a full-sized glossy magazine with active website, is published every-other-week and is the only GLBT publication in the MMPA. The competition within the MMPA is hefty; these awards are judged by Lavender's peers and the other publications are exceptional. Having submitted thirteen entries, to leave with ten was especially thrilling and it resulted a record-breaking year for our award shelves. Please take a moment to glance at the masthead on page 6: all of those individuals—and so many additional freelance contributors—are what made these awards happen. And, not to be understated, Lavender thanks the readers who expect the best. We will continue to strive for it.



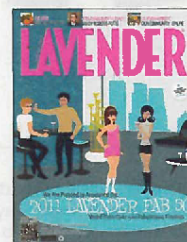
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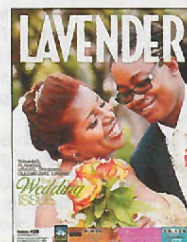
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Bronze



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Bronze: July 28, 2011



FEATURE DESIGN
SPECIAL INTEREST, UNDER 60,000
Silver: Fab 50



SINGLE-TOPIC ISSUE
SPECIAL INTEREST
Silver: The Wedding Issue



REGULAR COLUMN
SPECIAL INTEREST
Bronze: Slice by Joy Summers



HOW-TO ARTICLE
SPECIAL INTEREST
Bronze: Pride Party Recipes by Ross Sveback



PROFILE ARTICLE
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Bronze: Jin Xing: "We Share One Space, We Breathe Together" by Lannie Walker



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VOTE NO
DON'T LIMIT THE
FREEDOM TO MARRY

HAUNTED ONE

Thank You, Allies



This column is being written before Election Day, November 6. You won't be reading it until after the election has been held. That doesn't matter, because whichever way the election turns out, the message of this column is the same:

Thank you, allies. Thank you from the bottom of my very gay heart.

I wrote a column in 2005 (*Lavender* #265, July 22) about the importance of having allies. The column was based on a song, "Not In Our Town," that I had heard sung at a recent Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus concert. The song told what happened in Billings, Montana in 1993: the town responded to anti-Jewish hate crimes by displaying paper menorahs in a window of almost every home, whether the people who lived there were Jewish or not. The song's chorus ended with "No hate/No violence/Not in our town."

In that column, I wondered "what would happen if large numbers of people everywhere—gays, lesbians, bisexuals, trans people, and allies alike—all started wearing pink triangles" as a show of solidarity. Then I made a proposition:

Wear a pink triangle. Wear it all the time. Wear it proudly. When people look shocked and say, "I didn't know you were gay," either tell them, "Well, I am," or tell them, "Well, I'm not—but I have a lot of friends who are, and I don't like seeing them discriminated against."

I could never have envisioned that, in Minnesota at least, that symbol of solidarity would be neither pink nor a triangle. It would be orange and blue, or blue and orange. It would take the form of lawn signs, buttons, stickers, t-shirts, billboards, and even automobiles wrapped in the "VOTE NO" message.

The orange and blue symbol would be worn and displayed both by members of the GLBT community and by people who do not consider themselves members of that community, but who have nevertheless risen to the community's aid. They saw injustice for what it was and refused to accept

it without a fight. And every time I saw one of those orange and blue markers, I felt a little more hopeful about the future.

So much was so different when I came out in 1974. It was five years past Stonewall. The first Gay Pride celebration in Minneapolis had been held only two years earlier, in 1972. And, in 1971, Minnesota's own Jack Baker and Mike McConnell had been the first same-sex couple anywhere to attempt getting married.

Nevertheless, for much of my time as a gay man, marriage was something that was for other people but not for me. In my mother's book, *My Son Eric*, she writes of my reaction to my older sister's wedding (which, unbeknownst to her, took place shortly after I realized I was gay):

Eric had said after [the] wedding, "It made me sort of sad." "Why?" I had asked. "Because it will never be that way for me."

At the time, she thought I was referring to the church where the wedding had been held, which was something of a family tradition. When she later found out I was gay, it suddenly dawned on her what I had meant.

What a difference 38 years makes. I have lived through an epidemic, one that is still claiming lives. I have marched against Anita Bryant, both in Minneapolis and in St. Paul, when she came to town. I've seen the Pride celebration grow and have seen many more allies show up for it in recent years than I saw years ago. I've seen Minneapolis dubbed the gayest city in the country. I've seen the progress toward equality the GLBT community has made in so many areas. And I've seen the backlashes against that progress, among them bullying and, this year, the marriage amendment.



Photo by Steve Lenius

I suspect there are as many reasons for taking a stand against the Minnesota marriage amendment as there are people who have taken that stand. Some are themselves members of the GLBT community. Some have children in the GLBT community. Or parents. Or aunts or uncles. Or friends. Or coworkers. Or, perhaps, none of the above—just a sense of basic fairness.

Whatever the reason, many, many folks have come forward and said that they felt the Minnesota marriage amendment was uncalled for, and they have backed that assertion with their dollars, their volunteer efforts, and their votes. It has been truly amazing, and a more than a little humbling, to watch.

Now that at least this phase of the struggle for marriage equality will have concluded by the time you read this, there is only one thing appropriate to say when you have been the recipient of the kindness of so many thousands—hundreds of thousands—of people across the state. It's something that perhaps our allies don't hear often enough: I feel such gratitude for all your efforts and support. Thank you. Thank you so much. □

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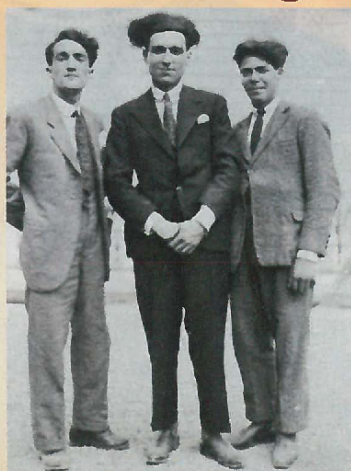
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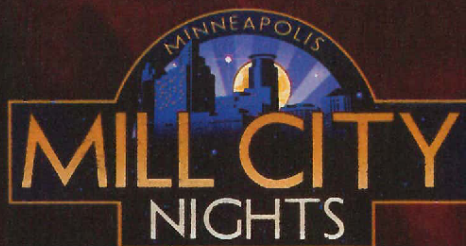
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Jake

THE TEXT showed up on a stunning Sunday afternoon. *"In town for three days, would love to see you."*

I didn't recognize the number and texted back, *"Who is this?"*

Thirty seconds later, I had the answer: *"Jake Lord."*

Oh my god. Jake. He operated a South Dakota trucking company that I had represented ten years before, back when I was a man and attack dog lawyer. We had met only once in person, in the late '90s. Everything else was by telephone and email. That was until I closed my law firm in 2010 after coming out as Ellen.

I remembered Jake as tall, goateed, and handsome. He was extremely Dem-liberal like me. Our business calls usually evolved to politics and family. Never mind that he was married—he seemed so *perfect*.

Three and a half years ago, I sent Jake a letter advising that I was transitioning from man to woman. Two hundred other people—all clients, other lawyers, and judges—got the same letter. Jake emailed afterwards, *"No problem, I wish you the best of luck."*

I figured I'd never see Jake ever again. Now, he wanted to see me.

With make-up in place and my hair done well, I rode my bike to a Washington Avenue bar and walked in. I found Jake wearing a Bears cap, sitting in a booth. He smiled when this tall blonde appeared before him. A second later, he stood and hugged me.

"Good to see you, Ellen," he said above

the din of the crowded post-Vikings game barroom.

He had aged a bit but the goatee—my favorite on any man—was still present. He remained handsome, too. Above all else, he was curious. About me.

"So tell me, what's it like to no longer have it," he asked after some small talk.

"You mean my penis?" I replied.

"Right."

"To be honest," I answered, "It's quite wonderful. I never liked that thing very much anyway. All it did was get me into trouble. Now I've got only clean lines, the way it was supposed to be."

I would have sworn that he squirmed in his seat. Like most men, I'm sure he couldn't imagine being without it.

We talked families and politics, only for him to come back with questions. "I hope you don't mind," he said.

"Of course not." I was the first transgender person he'd ever met. I understood he needed to explore. Plus, I enjoyed the idea of an attractive man sort of fawning over me.

"Are they real? And let me tell you, they sure look real." He was, of course, asking about—and looking at—my breasts.

"Yes, Jake, they're real," I said. I didn't mind his directness, but I wasn't going to get into the intricacies of breast growth via hormones or the choices a girl must make between silicone and saline.

"And your hair. I can't believe how long it is."

I smiled and shook my head ever so slightly for effect, just as any woman would. I could appreciate Jake's shock—the last time he saw me, I had a near crew-cut. It was the only way I wore my hair was a man.

He had another question. "Do you have actual curves, just like a woman?"

"Yes, Jake, I have actual curves," I said. "You'd be surprised what a little estrogen will do for you. Besides that, I've got a better looking butt than I ever did as a man."

Jake grinned.

We ordered another round of drinks and moved on to the old days when I was his attorney. We talked about some victories and how the world had changed so very much from our last in-person meeting. He was divorced now—*hooray!*—but living with a woman, a conservative Republican. *Drat*.

"How could you?" I was genuinely aghast.

"She has other redeeming qualities," he said. "Everything works as long as we don't talk politics."

I suspected she wouldn't have been crazy about Jake meeting me.

I had to be somewhere else, and it was time for me to go.

Jack hugged me again, and we said our goodbyes. I took a dozen steps and heard, "Ellen!"

I turned around and saw Jack grinning once more. He was giving the thumbs up sign.

I guessed that he agreed with me about my butt. ■



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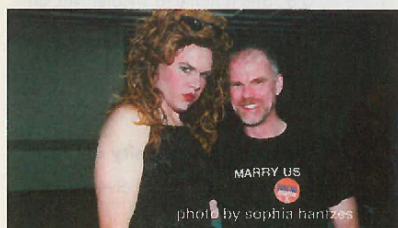
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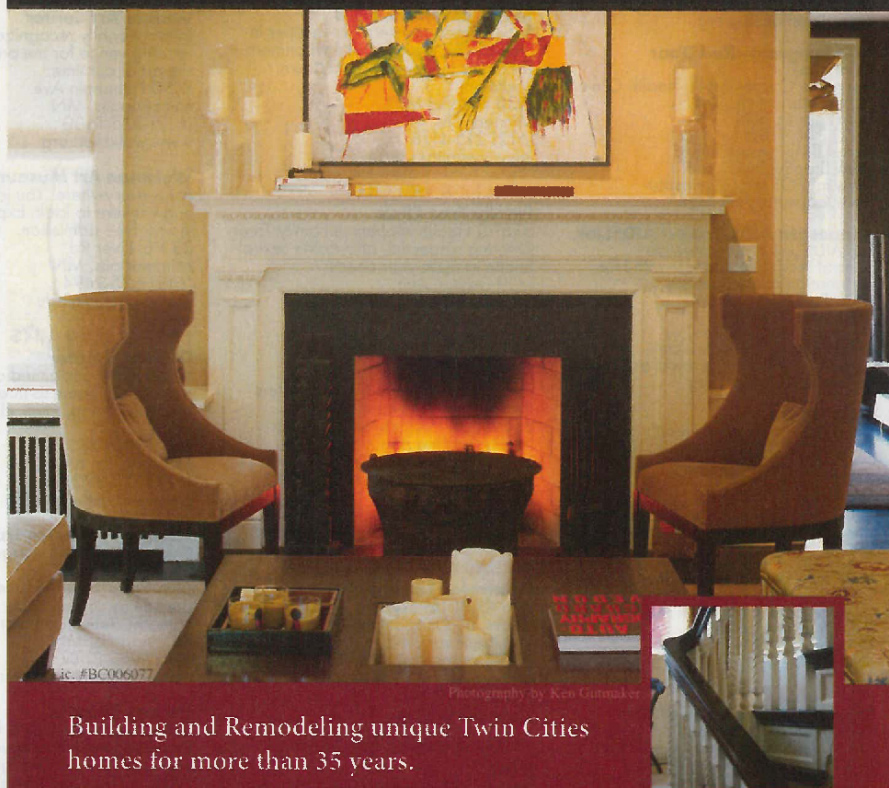


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Oh, Moses!

DEAR READERS, your columnist is in the dumps. Perhaps it's the change of seasons. Maybe it's middle-age malaise. Or it could be that I'm depressed because no one cares enough about Anne Baxter to post clips of her on YouTube. I spent most of the night searching in vain for amusing scenes featuring Ms. Baxter in "The Ten Commandments" ("Oh, Moses! Moses!") and "All About Eve" ("When you're a secretary in a brewery, it's hard to make believe you're anything else. Everything is beer.") And now I'm tired, disappointed, and a little weepy. Searches on Tallulah Bankhead, Fanny Brice, Beatrice Lillie and Thelma Ritter produced a similar paucity of results.

These great ladies used to be part of the gay cannon, and now they're fading portraits hanging in the dusty attics of Beyoncé, Gaga, Madonna and Pink. The gay boys, who have long been responsible for keeping the old divas memories alive, have traded in the yeoman-like work of mining gems from forgotten 1940s radio shows for the easy delights of posting clips from the latest catfight on "The Real Housewives of New Jersey."

In order to stop this revolting trend, I proposed taking some of my young gay boys on a road trip to visit historic diva sites in the Midwest.

"It will be like when Auntie Mame

packed everyone in the car and drove out to Larchmont!" I exclaimed.

"Who's Auntie Mame?" asked one young gay.

"What's a Larchmont?" asked another.

(I realize I should take this moment to explain the cultural significance of the madcapped Auntie Mame. But, honestly! Read the book or watch the [original] movie, you lazy asses. Educate yourselves!)

Our first stop was Michigan City, Indiana, where Anne Baxter was born. Next we travelled to Peru, Indiana, to the birthplace of Cole Porter.

"But he wasn't a lady or a diva," one of my gays whined.

"No, but he birthed some of the 20th century's greatest divas. If it wasn't for Cole, there would be no Ethel Merman. And if there was no Merman, there'd be no Patti LuPone or Bette Midler. And without Bette and Patti, there'd be no Gaga or Adele."

"Oh, so kind of like if there was no Cher there would be no Madonna," one boy said, clutching his heart, which fluttered madly at the thought of a world without those two vampires. (And I mean that in the most flattering way. They're ageless, powerful, and I suspect they suck the blood of young prey.)

Finally, we headed to Milwaukee to Ten Chimneys, the summer home of Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt. Here sexually

confused married couples entertained the finest thespians of the day: Noel Coward, Helen Hayes, Vivian Leigh, Laurence Olivier, Carol Channing, etc.

Our tour guide explained that Alfred was a control freak who fretted over every detail of the great house, while Lynn spent most days in her bedroom, staring at herself in the mirror.

"She'd spend eight hours preparing herself for dinner while Alfred ran around the estate, dusting, topping off guests' cocktails, and rearranging objects d'art," the guide said.

"All day in front of a mirror!" one of the boys exclaimed. "I'll bet even Barbra can't match that. We must look her up on YouTube!" We pulled out our iPhones and started to type.

We found a total of one(!) video. "This is an outrage!" exclaimed one of my newly enlightened young friends. "Something must be done about this."

And, so, on our drive home we agreed to spend eight hours a week scouring sources for media on the great, old broads. Please join us! Gays, we owe it to this sad, rapidly warming planet to keep things fabulous and witty. Because, as Tallulah Bankhead once said, "If you really want to help the American theater, don't be an actress, darling. Be an audience." ▣

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Room for Ghosts

CHRISTMAS WAS once filled with activity—uncles and aunts, cousins, grandparents, moms and dads, all wrapping last-minute gifts in guest bedrooms, cooking Christmas dinner and prepping desserts, straightening Christmas decorations, gossiping over sweet tea, fussing at the kids to settle down (and “get off the roof of that car!” I so fondly recall one year).

The bustle lasted all day Christmas Eve, until Mama, my grandmother, finished her cooking and announced that Christmas Supper was ready. And at this matriarch’s call, a kitchen built to accommodate six people filled with twenty.

My mom and I would make our way through the kitchen line for food every year, and every year when we’d pass the candied yams, I’d comment on how much I hated them. She’d remind me that I didn’t, and I’d end up eating nearly a plate full. I still say I hate them to this day, though I haven’t had them in years—I maintain my taste buds have changed.

I look back at pictures of those times now—pictures of kids stacked around the Christmas tree, posing for that agonizing last-minute picture before we could get to our presents, and the pictures hint to how terrible we were: rabbit ears behind one another’s heads, funny faces, awkward poses. Clearly, a menacing bunch.

These were cozy times filled with food

and unfettered, carefree happiness; school was out, family was around, and the play was unending. When I was young, I figured times like these would last forever.

They didn’t.

Things change. As the kids grew up, we also grew out. We went to college and moved away. We’d come back for Christmas, of course, but it wasn’t like before. It was a strange period when the kids were no longer kids, but weren’t ready to have their own. And when they married, they spent “split Christmases” with each side of their newly formed families, and we saw less and less of them. Their focus turned to their immediate families, and our holidays began to contract.

My grandmother’s death was the breaking point. She, the matriarch and the bedrock, she who held our extended family together, was gone, and with her went our sense of a “Family Holiday.”

I spend my Christmases now with the only real family I have left: my Aunt Barbara, who is my second mother, my inspiration, my everything. Every Christmas, she and I have dinner with her son and grandson, we drink with her many friends, and we reminisce over a bottle of wine about how things used to be and how things have changed. Though this sounds sad, it isn’t: a pang of loneliness every year, yes, but a gratefulness for have what we now.

You feel this pang as well, I’m guessing. It’s not abnormal this time of year to wallow in nostalgia, to remember the days when the holidays came without a sense of loneliness, to remember the era of “everybody”—the time of your life when you were young enough to see everyone you knew in a single room.

Holidays in adulthood are haunted. These hauntings we call “memories”—hauntings that our hearts necessitate, treasure, and desire: a blend of longing for what once was and an underlined adoration for what is now.

What then do we do when the holidays bring to us this contorted duo of happiness and longing? Do we endeavor to replicate the feelings from *then*? Or do we suck it up, push through the holidays with the linger of the “good ol’ days,” and make memories anew?

I say none of the above. I say we embrace our longing for yesteryear rather than ignore it. I say we cry over what (and whom) we’ve lost while we’re around the people whom we love. We thus exhaust our grievances with those whom we share the strongest solidarity to become closer, and to free our minds with the knowledge that we aren’t alone. This act, you’ll see, will open the door to a newer, more mature, more wonderful holiday than you’d ever expect.

Don’t push out the longing that comes with the holidays. Remember to leave room for ghosts. ■



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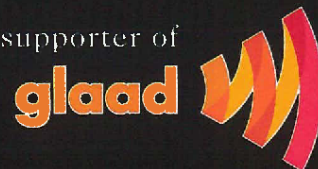


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